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ABSTRACT

Research on how to measure the success of educational innovations is lacking. However, a form of analysis called "organizational frames" can be used to study organizational change in schools. This approach was used to evaluate British Columbia's "Program for Quality Teaching" (PQT). The organizational-frames approach identifies four aspects of organizational life: bureaucratic-structural, human resource, political, and cultural symbolic. This framework is well suited for understanding schools because it stresses the human resource and symbolic frames. PQT was a peer consultation program that incorporated observation and feedback. Teachers improved their teaching by observing colleagues and providing feedback. PQT's growth and survey results indicated the program was successful. There was not a strong bureaucratic-structural aspect because the program did not seriously disrupt the teachers' schedules. However, PQT was profoundly political and was tied to the struggles between the teachers' union and the government. The symbolic and cultural aspects of PQT were visible to school staff and had several dimensions. The cooperation required by the program demonstrated that administrators and staff could work together. PQT also fulfilled human resource needs by serving as a professional-development program. (Contains 19 references.) (JPT)

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FILLING THE FRAMES: USING BOLMAN AND DEAL TO ANALYZE AN EDUCATIONAL INNOVATION

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Introduction

What accounts for the success or failure of educational innovations? The theoretical and research literature is extensive--and inconclusive. Scholars and practitioners have known for decades that successful change requires good ideas, leader and member commitment, a favorable external environment, and luck. However, these factors have never been systematized, and accounts of innovation and change generally have taken a single approach or highlighted a specific factor that seems to have been decisive in generating favorable outcomes. We suggest here that the concept of "organizational frames," an analysis popularized by Bolman and Deal, 1984; 1991), provides a unique window on the process of organizational change in schools. To illustrate the potential match between this conceptual framework and empirical reality, we describe and analyze British Columbia's "Program for Quality Teaching" (PQT) as it evolved in the from 1986 to 1990. PQT was designed as a vehicle for peer consultation, whereby teachers learned strategies for working together to improve one another's teaching on dimensions of each teacher's choosing. Specifically, PQT training developed clinical supervision and conferencing skills that emphasized teacher empowerment, reciprocity, and mutual support. Where implemented, PQT affected organizational as well as individual behavior, largely because it effectively addressed four distinct types of organizational needs.

Conceptual Framework

In 1984 Lee Bolman and Terrence Deal published Modern Approaches to Understanding and Managing Organizations. In this volume they argued that managers must be attentive to four conceptually distinct, but practically overlapping, aspects of organizational life: (1) bureaucratic-structural, (2) human resource, (3) political, and (4) cultural-symbolic. The structural frame is the organization's formal, often written rules, policies, processes. The human resource frame refers to the needs satisfaction, motivation, and career development of the organization's staff. The political frame reminds us that organizations are constrained by outside forces and beset by internal differences about ends, means, and rewards, and that these must be managed even if they cannot be overcome. The symbolic frame emphasizes how needs

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for social solidarity and transcendent meaning are constant, if oft unrecognized, aspects of organizational life. Bolman and Deal suggest that, because most issues and problems correspond to specific frames, successful managers move comfortably between them.

As with many good ideas, Bolman and Deal's are derivative. Specifically, they owe much to the "four-function paradigm" of Talcott Parsons: adaptation, goal attainment, integration, and latency are very similar to the political, structural, symbolic, and human resource frames respectively. Parsons' work was more formalistic, however, and he tended to link each component to specific aspects of organizational structure so that, for instance, issues of latency were addressed largely in corporate training programs or departments. Bolman and Deal believe that the frames can and do cut across organizational functions. But, like Parsons, Bolman and Deal's 1984 work tended to separate the frames, ignoring boundaries between them or the ways in which many, if not most, organizational phenomena may require observers or leaders to use all four frames simultaneously. Gareth Morgan (1986) took a much bolder tack in Images of Organization, arguing that managers and scholars should use many perspectives simultaneously.

Bolman and Deal's (1991) more recent book, Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership, marches to the same tune, hoping not to change managerial behavior as much as "to cultivate habits of mind and enrich managerial thinking" (p. 16). Their approach is as useful for organizational analysis as it is for management action. Deal and Bolman (1991: 311), in fact, point to three studies that effectively employ all four frames in interpreting organizational phenomena: Birnbaum's research on higher education, Kanter's (1983) research on organizational change, and Perrow's (1986) research on the nuclear accident at Three Mile Island.

Bolman and Deal's framework seems especially appropriate for understanding schools because the human resource and symbolic frames have always been so salient. Human resource issues are the essence of education. Schools are necessarily "people-oriented," and a willingness to work with people--young people at least--is a perquisite for making education a career choice. As schools deal with complex student learning problems, an explicit human resource orientation towards students and staff becomes even more necessary. Educational issues have always taken on large meanings for educators and publics, which reinforces the sense that its symbolic content is high. And the politics of education has become more evident, probably more strident, with each passing year as the boundaries between the school building and its external environment blur even to the point of disappearing altogether. Moreover, as schools become increasingly diverse by class, race, and ethnicity, political and symbolic issues come to be intertwined with one another. And, although the essence of education has never been defined by bureaucracy, regulations, files, and schedules provide an everpresent backdrop for virtually every educational organization.

Bolman and Deal provide a structure for understanding these organizational issues. More significantly, they provide a scheme for analyzing specific innovations from such major undertakings as school restructuring to more limited efforts such as the

Program for Quality Teaching. Their approach is different from, yet consistent with previous literature on planned organizational changes in schools. Planned change, the commitment to an orderly, and thoughtful, and participative process of change provides a framework for melding the change requirements of super- and subordinates. The extensive literature on planned changes suggest the following factors are associated with successful change in schools: the combination of institutional commitment, appropriate structural rearrangement, teacher willingness to change (Charters & Jones, 1975); teachers professional commitment and association membership (Corwin, 1975); the relative advantage of the new idea including its compatibility with teachers' values, needs and previous ideas, and implementation strategies that reduce both complexity and risk for adopters (Rogers & Svenning, 1969). PQT fits many of these characteristics, representing an integration of professionals' enthusiasm, the loosely coupled nature of most school systems in even a relatively centralized provincial setting, and a change process that served the political needs of school districts, administrators, teachers, and their federation.

A review of data about PQT suggests that Bolman and Deal's frames do provide an even more fruitful approach to understanding this particular programmatic innovation. The frames organize conceptually some of the issues considered, and solutions offered, by program developers, by the teaching federation, by school districts, and to a lesser extent by participating teachers. And PQT's ability to persist seems to have been in part due to its ability to satisfy the "needs" of each frame.

The Program for Quality Teaching as a Research Site

PQT was a "peer consultation" program, incorporating the specific techniques of observation and feedback derived from the "clinical supervision" model of teacher supervision and evaluation. Specifically, teachers learned to analyze and adapt their own teaching, and to provide useful feedback and suggestions to colleagues through the mechanism of a reciprocal, egalitarian two or three-person team. Each team member in turn observes colleagues, and feedback meetings between colleagues, and experiences being observed himself or herself. Initial training ran from 5 to 8 days, with substantial follow-up during the first year. Specific techniques--preconferencing, listening, observing, post-conferencing, etc.--were first taught in workshops, then tried out in practice, and followed-up in subsequent workshops (Smith and Acheson,).

PQT was initiated by the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF) in 1984. The BCTF wanted a program that would both preempt a proposed provincially mandated teacher evaluation scheme, and provide ongoing professional development (BCTF, 1984). The federation saw PQT as an aggressive attack on teacher isolation, and expressed the hope that the program could help avoid the one-stop, one-shot approaches to professional in-service activities that were common to many provincial, district, university, and federation professional development efforts. Moreover, the federation was interested in having some classroom-oriented professional improvement activities that could formally be separated from the supervisory process. Teacher supervision and evaluation always contains some stressful elements, and tension

between teachers and administrators was exacerbated by the overt political conflict between the BCTF and the province's governing Social Credit party (Killian, 1985). The program goals stressed individual and collective professional growth and improvement, grounded in a rhetoric of "reflective practice." The BCTF underwrote all training costs, and this made several school districts willing to negotiate collaborative contracts that required the districts to pay for release time, both for training and for subsequent observation and conferencing cycles. Typically, teachers observe one another on a monthly basis.

PQT began with workshops in two districts during summer, 1986 and expanded gradually both inside those districts and to additional districts. Teachers were volunteers. Schools could participate if at least two teachers and their principal participated in the intensive five-day introductory workshop. These workshops, planned by participants as well as facilitators, had a high (6:1) ratio of participants to facilitators; most of the latter were themselves teachers. The training emphasized an orientation that urged teachers to set individual, rather than collective, instructional goals, and to improve practice in each teacher's own terms.

PQT is especially interesting because its sustained growth in a period of scarce resources provides an indicator of its success. The program grew from its original three districts, 18 schools and 70 participants in 1986 to 7 districts, 57 schools, and 252 participants in 1991. All five districts involved in the program during its first 18 months added at least a second wave of teachers.

A second measure of the program's perceived success came from survey and interview data conducted during the program's first eighteen months (Smith, 1989). These data indicated that participants were almost unanimous in their positive reactions and in their desire to continue the program. Teachers indicated a high degree of satisfaction with PQT's structure and content, with support levels from the teachers' federation and district and building administrators, and with the impact of the program on individual professional development and collegial relationships. Data from a less extensive follow-up study of original volunteers suggests that commitment persists in settings providing sustained support levels and persists for a few teachers who continue peer consultation on their own and without institutional support. Educators attributed their loss of interest to staff turnover, that is individual moves, moves by partners or administrators, rather than to dissatisfaction with PQT (Goldman, 1991).

The study's data base incorporates information collected from three different, yet related, research endeavors. In 1987 each of the 79 original participants was surveyed, and this was followed by 75 interviews, with some 35 respondents, most of whom were interviewed more than once (Smith, 1989). A new survey was conducted with 70 participants in 1990, and this was supplemented by 15 interviews (Goldman, 1991). Data from a third study, a history of PQT using internal and published BCTF and school district documents, provides additional perspective (Shamsher, 1992).

Findings and Interpretations

Alone among the four frames, PQT seemed only loosely coupled to the **bureaucratic-structural** aspects of school organization. Participating teachers had to schedule meeting and observation times and have the principal arrange for substitutes, but their collaboration had no immediate impact on the day-to-day work lives of other, non-participating colleagues. Unlike other educational changes--schedule or curriculum reconstruction for instance--PQT was primarily an individual-level change, doubled, with few multiplier effects. Bureaucracy, especially schedules are an important component of a school's stability because order and predictability cannot always be taken for granted. Teachers, for instance, suggested that the success of the program depended heavily on the principal's role in the implementation and day-to-day operations. The principals at the sites had all interpreted their roles in PQT in different ways. Some involved themselves in the process as colleague observers and teachers as well as offering administrative support. Other principals had interpreted their roles more as facilitators who provided the necessary administrative support and assistance. Principals might "spring a teacher" when she required more time for work on PQT. As one principal remarked:

> Because this program is from the grass roots, I think my support is better demonstrated in terms of administering in terms of meetings and things like facilitating and helping. To be frank, I would be better off taking a small role in observing and coding.

Scheduling issues in school buildings should never be underestimated. Teachers frequently make adjustments to unexpected circumstances that interfere with their long and short-term plans, yet at the same time they resent these interferences when they originate from colleagues or principals. One factor contributing to the positive reactions to PQT was the absence of structural dislocation for teachers who had not chosen to participate in the project, and the realization by participants that their own involvement did not cross barriers that violated colleagues' zone of indifference.

Groups of participating teachers tried to create their own structures. Almost all the participants mentioned, both in the interviews and the questionnaires, that their biggest challenge was working peer consultation into an already demanding schedule, "on top of everything else". Most of those who were succeeding with classroom observations and regular meetings indicated that the key for them was to have regularly scheduled group meetings that each member of the group considered an absolute priority. The meetings acted as a support mechanism, and often when regular scheduling was not adopted, many teachers failed to keep to attend ad hoc meetings.

Structural constraints can be broken down. Some principals were impressed enough with PQT that they found ways to bring some of its attributes, specifically time for teachers to observe colleagues teaching, into their building's normal mode of operation. This required them to use their abilities as facilitators to cover classes when teachers were outside their rooms as observers. Arranging such resources exercises the type of facilitative power that principals find essential in managing schools undergoing any type of change (Goldman, *et al.*, 1993). Moreover, in at least some schools, PQT

allowed principals to reconfigure bureaucratic requirements for teacher supervision. PQT provided a credible substitute for top-down evaluation of teachers' performance, and created some tension between what went on in the schools, what was required by district and provincial policy, and what had been negotiated in the collective bargaining agreement. This had a debureaucratizing effect, and reflects the ability of some principals to create opportunities out of, rather than feeling constrained by, the clinical supervision process (Dunlap and Goldman, 1991).

We should note in passing, however, that while we may partially explain PQT's success as a function of <u>not</u> requiring structural changes, this also sets limits and boundaries for success. The program was an individual-level and group-level change that appeared to have some (positive) school wide consequences. But in no way did it fit definitions of school restructuring wherein the process and effects of change is essentially systemic. Only in one school, where every teacher participated, did PQT have an impact on the master schedule. The absence of structural dislocation had a political effect as well since PQT enthusiasts did not have to drag along reluctant associates. It is not yet clear whether PQT can be generalized effectively to all or most teachers, and whether diffusion--if it occurs at all--will require structural changes that could have their own unintended consequences. Teachers were acutely aware of this fact, and it contributed to their willingness to become involved and to consider making some individual level changes:

> I think this program is a good one because people are volunteering to get involved... if you want to do it, it will happen. If it's imposed, it may happen for a short time at a superficial level, but because this (PQT) is made by people's own choice, and they're able to play with it. It's a bit like a computer; if you <u>have to</u> do an assignment on it, it might not be so fun. But, if you play with it doing different things...I think it's the same with this, it's so open to teaching strategies, styles, different things you can do. People don't have to feel like they are in some kind of mold; they can pursue the areas they would like to pursue.

That quote provides an apt transition to the **political** dimensions of the Program for Quality Teaching. PQT was profoundly political in its inspiration. From its inception, PQT was affected profoundly by both the micro-political and the macro-political environment of education in British Columbia during the mid-1980s. We deal with the latter first. In British Columbia virtually everything was affected by the trench warfare between the BCTF and the conservative Social Credit government. The party governed the province for four decades after World War II with only a single two year interlude. Historically, the Socreds had been hostile to labor unions and unsympathetic to teachers whom they saw as representing the twin evils of liberalism and secularism. The BCTF responded with negative, frequently hyperbolic imagery and consistently confrontational politics. Crawford Kilian (1985) has detailed the early years of the conflict in his aptly named book, <u>School Wars</u>. BCTF President Pat Clarke's 1986 proclamation of support for PQT provides an example of the federation's interpretation of the political environment they faced at the time.

> Current and anticipated initiatives on the part of the ministry to increase its control over teaching methods, practices and curriculum represent a government inspired specter for teachers who are already hard pressed to carry out their duties under steadily worsening conditions. There is a clear and present government agenda for public education which will have as its outcome further restrictions of teachers' rights and autonomy through such measures as restricted teaching certificates and mandatory "upgrading." All of this is done, of course, as a means to scapegoat teachers for the government's own shortcomings in not providing adequate resources for quality education.

Teachers, including PQT participants, were aware of these larger political dynamics:

> It was the fact that the government came out in the newspapers and said that teachers don't know what they are doing, and that someone needs to look at what teachers are doing, so I felt that yes it's easy to say we'll police ourselves, but if we don't have any background or know how, how can we do it? We need to be able to come back to the government body and say "we have done this and people have been trained to look after each other". You have to have something concrete. You can't just say you will do it . And if we don't there will be someone that will be 'looking after us.'

These forces also created difficult issues at the district level

Moreover, PQT provided teachers and administrators with a tool to finesse two perennial problems in the micropolitics of schools: teacher evaluation and the management of innovation. It gave teachers more tools for, and hence more control over, the supervision process and invited principals to participate as peers in the assessment of teaching. Moreover, as a volunteer program, PQT largely avoided provoking the type of active and passive resistance that accompanies many school-based changes. Administrators are generally sensitive to these problems, and often look for ways they can provide the kind of leadership that overcomes them.

> At that time I guess I was probably looking for some really good way to do supervision without this very, very strong commitment to evaluation, because I've always believed that teachers can do good work if they're helped along the way. But that it's not going to help them teach any better if somebody is coming in and saying, "Don't, that's not the way", and all that kind of stuff. So I've always been looking for something that would be a collegial approach. So when at the principal's meeting they asked for schools to volunteer I brought it back to the staff and found that there were people that would like to do it. That was how we got into it.

However, as Shamsher (1992) suggests, PQT presented principals with the challenge of creating a compromise between a low profile involvement, which would be perceived

as insufficient support and too high a profile which could be perceived as their being too aggressive.

PQT also had effects on the micro-politics of teacher collegiality within schools. The program requirement that teachers volunteer, rather than be volunteered, encouraged enthusiasm rather than resistance to change (Hanson, 1985). "We have 11 staff involved of a staff of 24...I think that is why it is working...I do think that it would be an imposition to be imposing PQT on people who are not involved. Sure you may gain a couple of people who might not want to do it, but on the other side...people would resist, then as soon as you have bad feelings going [you have] a rotten apple and it spreads." Participants were generally experienced teachers neither fully satisfied by the status quo nor entrenched within it. "I am one of the younger teachers...and this is my eleventh year. We are looking...at people...who ask questions before jumping in an trying it."

In some buildings informal lobbying of staff members attempted to build support. For example in one school, the original PQT group of teachers lobbied other school staff members to participate and introduced the PQT sessions informally and formally with their colleagues throughout the fall period. In a half-day session, the local BCTF president and the district assistant superintendent helped in the presentation of the PQT model with the staff. Both individuals had attended the summer session and were actively helping out in schools which elicited their assistance. Following this presentation, and with further guidance from the original PQT team, all the staff members agreed to give PQT an experimental first try (Shamsher, 1992).

Moreover, while program guidelines protected them from superiors, teachers still had to be willing to take the risks of opening their classrooms to peer observers, to learn how to give critical and constructive feedback in a fashion that enhanced rather than inhibited collegial exchange. According to Lortie (1975), teachers traditionally find this difficult. While teacher stress and "burn-out" are difficult to document in research, clearly these teachers came from those who either had avoided burn-out or were anxious to overcome it.

Finally, we should note one of actual as well as the potential rewards of PQT. This was the creation of a PQT subculture among those who had invested themselves in the program. In several schools, the PQT group provided mutual reinforcement and support, and created a collective sense that participants were an elite group truly grappling with significant professional issues and their own professional development. In short, they developed an active subculture built upon a common sense of their own "reflective practice." According to the survey, PQT enhanced relationships within the group and with the principal, but lead to little or no change in relations with non-PQT staff. However, there seems to have been resentment in some schools: "Try to sell the program? People will resent it. We're the 'in' group...They always see the subs here. They say, oh, are you doing 'quality teaching' today."

The **symbolic** and cultural aspects of PQT were particularly visible to school staff and had several dimensions. First of all, in BC's rapidly changing industrial relations

environment--where teacher unionism is not favorably viewed by the government and by segments of the public--the visibility of "labor-management" cooperation signaled to participants and outsiders that the district could rise above the conflicts and negotiations in day-to-day work life. One teacher commented that "there's a lot of paranoia because ...the administrators and teachers are split apart on the issue [of whether the] pro-D stuff will be coming from the top down rather than from the teachers themselves."

Administrators willingness to support an effort initiated largely by the BCTF. made a positive impression on many teachers. This support was intangible as well as tangible, involving presence at workshops and meetings as well as committing district funds. It involved protecting the project from skeptics inside and outside the school buildings and districts. According to this teacher "the principal offers the program a necessary stamp of approval and indication of quality. People want to see that from the principal. Survey results reinforce this impression. Teachers believed that both their district's central administration and their individual principal were highly supportive of PQT.

Equally important, public recognition of the professional development component of the project and the willingness to segregate formally professional development and teacher evaluation reinforced the symbolic component of PQT. Part of the symbolism, in fact, occurred in areas where symbolic aspects of PQT actually overlapped with bureaucratic-structural and human resource issues in the organization. Accordingly, in an occupation that is often underappreciated and marginalized, PQT helped administrators and fellow teachers acknowledge and reinforce teachers professional self-concept (Lortie, 1975; Rosenholtz, 1988). For instance "I guess one of the most important things...has been the confidence...about my teaching...You realize that what you are doing is really not that awful."

Program developers and advocates advertised PQT as a professional development program, tying it directly to schools' **human resource** needs and capabilities. This rhetoric and symbolism of professional enhancement corresponded with the program's emphasis on human resources. Like most teachers, PQT participants identified specific unmet needs. These included the desire for constructive unthreatening performance feedback, for learning through observation, and for ways to overcome teachers' traditional isolation from peers (Lortie, 1975). The two teachers quoted below note the problems: First, "I feel uncomfortable when I have to go into a teacher's classroom to get something...I feel like I'm intruding on their space." Second, however, "two or three years down the road, you feel kind of isolated and think 'I wish somebody had seen that or...I wish someone could give me a hand with this.'" PQT seems to have helped teachers respond to those needs. "PQT helped me take a conscious look at what I was doing...It was that nice, easy, relaxed approach that makes you aware."

PQT's flexibility was an important element of teachers' positive reaction. It was never perceived as a "canned" program, and teachers could choose whether to use it to

generate a sometimes critical, but usually supporting, assessment of how they taught, to work on their own perceived weaknesses, to try something new and different, or to attempt to learn from watching colleagues in their classrooms. As one teacher explained:

> I think this program is a good one. . . [PQT] is made by people's own choice, and they're able to play with it. It's a bit like a computer; if you have to do an assignment on it, it might not be so fun. But, if you play with it doing different things...I think it's the same with this, it's so open to teaching strategies, styles, different things you can do. People don't have to feel like they are in some kind of mold; they can pursue the areas they would like to pursue.

Teachers were virtually unanimous in their belief that PQT substantially improved the focus and quality of collegial discussions and routine interactions, and a minority believed the program helped them move towards "reflective practice" (Smith, 1989).

Conclusions and Implications

We have allowed Bolman and Deal's "frames" to order the presentation above. However, it is evident that in the world of schools (and probably of organizations generally), the frames overlap substantially. Indeed, it is possible that when organizational change is in progress, the boundaries between frames are more important than the frames themselves. Frames represent not only concepts, but constituencies and interests as well, and "action" inside particular frames can effect each of the others. PQT filled multiple needs: for teachers' professional identity, growth, and recognition; for schools being able to bypass labor relations issues by separating supervision and evaluation, for administrators and teachers having a visible, shared product. These characteristics of PQT cannot neatly be categorized into the "symbolic," "political, or "human resource" frames. Moreover, they linked these frames together. Joint ownership, for instance, reflects a political reality but simultaneously serves as a symbolic referent.

One example shows how PQT as both a phenomenon and as a process crossed the boundaries of Bolman and Deal's frames. PQT participants appreciated the extent to which their principals were willing to support the project without intruding into the evaluation arena that often proves so contentious in public education (Haller & Strike, 1986).

> There was a hell of a lot of relief when I found that we were going to be concentrating on ourselves and not on evaluation in the old sense of the word...[not] the attitude that the way you get quality is you have people spied on by others.

In this area, the inspiration for PQT in the first place, all four frames offer insights; the link between the human resource and political elements of the program were especially

close. What tied them together was professional development: "I always felt that my evaluation was a bit of a performance...an you simply put on a show instead of working cooperatively in ways you would do outside the school." And, "If the principal is evaluating me, I don't venture off into new areas."

We close with a general caution about the utility of Bolman and Deal's use of "frames" as a mode of organizational analysis. The cautionIt is hard to avoid the conclusion that PQT, in both organizational and environmental dynamics, was driven sufficiently by politics that it is possible to consider that politics is dominant frame with the others offering only subsidiary insight. If so, we might consider whether this specific frame or metaphor usually or always offers disproportionate insight. Or, alternatively, will a single one of the four frames, no matter which one, usually or always be particularly useful in understanding organizational reality?

Note: This paper is a revised version of "Portrait of a Successful Educational Innovation: British Columbia's Program for Quality Teaching," which we presented at the 1991 meetings of the Canadian Society for the Study of Education. Two colleagues, Keith Acheson of the University of Oregon and Mohammed Shamsher of the BCTF, made substantial contributions to this project from its inception to the present.

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